

The Centre for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CLACS) University of London in collaboration with the Centre for Religion, Conflict and Globalization (CRCG) University of Groningen.

**CfP: Religion in Latin America and the Caribbean: Past, Present and Possible Futures.
Conference Proposal**

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Key words: Maya cosmovision, *Cholq'ij* sacred calendar digitisation, online/virtual place, postmemory, feminism, identity, ethnography, cultural resistance, indigenous communal organisations, decolonisation.

Title:

Digitising the Sacred: Maya women's cosmovision online.

The indigenous population of Latin America has been able to protect their culture, languages and knowledge by maintaining their beliefs. For them, to look to the past is as important as to live in the present. Hirsch (1996) recognises the inherent character of postmemory as 'the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth... shaped by traumatic events that can be neither fully understood nor recreated.' Traumatic events provoked by the Spanish invasion and colonisation, and the imposition of Christianity forced the Maya to create resistance strategies – oral history and specific traditional mnemonic systems – to maintain their ancestral knowledge, cosmovision and identity.

The uninterrupted use of the sacred Maya calendar *Cholq'ij* by the Mayas is part of this continuous act of resistance. Currently, feminist Maya women are contesting the narrative imposed by the state, social prejudices and media-imposed perceptions, reclaiming their place in society online. How is the *Cholq'ij* represented in Maya women's narratives in relation to their knowledge, world-views and philosophies online? The *Aj'quijab* are the guardians of the Maya tradition and the calendar's knowledge. By moving online, the *Cholq'ij* went from being a specialist calendar, interpreted by an *Aj'quijab*, inside a community in a defined time

and context, to being standardised and available to everybody. The process of conveying the *Cholq'ij*'s abstract concepts in a contested media, such as an online/virtual place, certainly implies a process of cultural surrender, yet paradoxically vital and empowering to Maya culture.

M. Giovanna Miralles Terán de Wilkin

Biographical Note

Giovanna graduated from the *International Cinema and Television School (EICTV)*, Cuba, with a scholarship from the *Fundación del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano*. She has worked in different areas of art and film production in Latin America and Europe, specialising in documentaries. In Guatemala, she studied the oral tradition and rituals of the Maya to become an *Aj'quijab'* or spiritual leader. Since moving to the UK she studied sociology at the Open University, and more recently worked in two documentaries: *UMATURKA: The Call of the Water* in 2016 as director, and *Legacies of 1936*, as scriptwriting editor and editor, in 2018.

Giovanna's research is focused in the areas of: documentary, post memory, feminism, identity, decolonisation, and cultural resistance.

Giovanna was awarded a University Scholarship to undertake the PhD study at Canterbury Christ Church University.

PhD Research Topic

Memory, identity and cultural resistance in Maya Guatemala: A study of women's post memory, rebuilding and coping with the repercussions of the civil war.

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